

## **44.390 Criminal Justice Research Methods**

**Fall Semester 2008**

**Coburn Hall 303**

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Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday 10:30 – 12:00 (and by appointment)

### **Course Description**

This course is designed to introduce students to research methods in the social and behavioral sciences. Students will examine the basic methods of research design, measurement, and data collection in Criminology and Criminal Justice. Students will learn a variety of research methods, put a few of these methods into practice, and will develop skills in deciding which method is best for the given problem that needs to be solved.

### **Course Objectives**

At the end of this course, students should have attained the knowledge and understanding of the research process to successfully conduct basic research in the areas of crime and justice. This course introduces students to the necessary components of the research process: research design; data collection methods; sampling procedures; reliability and validity; and elementary data analysis.

### **Required Texts**

Bachman, R. and Schutt, R. 2007. *The Practice of Research in Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Sage Publications, Inc.

I may assign additional readings as the semester progresses and/or I may alter the reading schedule so be prepared to be flexible.

### **Class Format**

A variety of learning techniques will be incorporated into this class, including lecture, class discussion, and group/individual projects. You are expected to be prepared for class (i.e. readings and assignments completed by the beginning of class). Your active participation will enhance your mastery of course materials, not to mention that it will have a positive impact on your grade.

### **Attendance**

It is expected that you will attend class. I will take roll each class period. If you miss a class, I expect advance notification via email. This course requires your constructive participation in class. I will monitor productive participation in class. There will be periodic (generally unannounced) quizzes, homework assignments or in-class projects

that cannot be made up. If you miss a class, borrow notes from a classmate or visit the Teaching Assistant during office hours.

*Tip for Success: Attend class and be involved!*

### **Assignments/Quizzes**

Assignments throughout the semester will provide an opportunity for you to apply, reflect and explore concepts discussed in class in more depth. The assignments will vary in format and point value. There will be weekly or bi-weekly assignments that students are expected to present to the class. Assignment(s) are due the moment you walk into class on the day they are due. If you have some sort of conflict, see me well BEFORE the assignment is due. Format on quizzes will vary. Quiz questions will come from readings and lectures. No make-up quizzes will be given.

*Tip for Success: Attend class; do the reading; ask for help when you need it, use available resources to aid your work.*

NOTE: Unless otherwise specified, papers and assignments must be submitted in hard copy by the due date.

### **Missing Exams**

The course will consist of four exams throughout the semester, each worth 100 points. Exam types will vary but primarily comprise multiple choice, true/false, and short answered questions. You may not miss any exam for any reason unless you have cleared it with me at least 2 weeks prior to the scheduled exam date. Failure to do this will earn you a zero on the exam. The only exception to this is an unavoidable emergency. In such cases, I require students to contact me as soon as possible to explain the situation, provide me with valid documentation of the emergency, and schedule a make-up. Make-up exams are given at a time of my choosing, and the format of the exam will be left to the instructor's discretion. I cannot emphasize strongly enough that you should not miss an exam.

### **Contacting Me**

If you need to contact me, use the email provided above. I do not check my phone messages on a regular basis. Leaving a message for me on the phone is not recommended.

### **Academic Dishonesty**

Cheating, plagiarism, or conspiracy to engage in these activities will not be tolerated. Examples of plagiarism include: attempting to pass off someone else's work as your own and turning in work previously submitted for another class. Consult the Undergraduate Bulletin for University regulations regarding this matter.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the Office of Student Disability Services in 240 O'Leary at 934-4574 as soon as possible to ensure that such accommodations are arranged in a timely fashion.

## University Grading Scale

### 100 point scale:

93+	A	83-86	B	73-76	C	60-66	D
90-92	A-	80-82	B-	70-72	C-	59 or less	F
87-89	B+	77-79	C+	67-69	D+		

## Class Policies

- Readings: You are expected to read, in advance, the chapters assigned for each class meeting. You will be responsible for reading material in the text, even if it is not covered in the class. Active class participation is expected and will impact your grade.
- Cell phones and pagers: Turn off before coming to class. This includes text messaging!
- Talking in class: I expect you to contribute to the discussion. I want to hear your opinions and thoughts regarding course material. I do not want to see or hear you talking with your classmates about what happened last night, what is going on this weekend, etc.
- Arrive on time to class and do not leave early. If you are late and attendance is already taken, you will not be counted for that day.
- Personal responsibility: I do not “give out” grades- you earn them. I do not review for exams – that is what the entire semester is all about. This means that when a grade is earned by you, I will not change it. Therefore, please see me or the course TA for help if you need it. Do not wait until it is too late to seek help.
- Our responsibilities to one another: I will prepare for class, do my best to introduce stimulating material, respect your thoughts and ideas, provide clear expectations and return assignments promptly. I ask you to arrive to class on time, come prepared, respect others’ views, and turn in assignments on time. Again, late assignments are not accepted unless you have an EXCUSED ABSENCE VERIFIED IN WRITING. If you have a problem with anything that is happening in class, please let me know. I cannot resolve problems if I do not know about them.

## Course Outline

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings</b>
September 4	Introduction to the Class	
September 9	Science, Society, and Research Homework Assignment #1	Chapter 1
September 11	Science, Society, and Research Cont.	Glassner Article
September 16	Process and Problems of Research Homework Assignment #2	Chapter 2
September 18	Process and Problems of Research Cont.	
September 23	Conceptualization and Measurement	Chapter 3
September 25	Conceptualization and Measurement Cont.	Esbensen et al. Article
<b>September 30</b>	<b>Exam #1 Chapters 1-3</b>	
October 2	Sampling	Chapter 4
October 7	Sampling Cont.	
October 9	Research Design	Chapter 5
October 14	Research Design Cont. Homework Assignment #3	
October 16	Experimental Design	Chapter 6
October 21	Experimental Design Cont. Homework Assignment#4	Sherman Article
<b>October 23</b>	<b>Exam #2 Chapters 4-6</b>	
October 28	Survey Research	Chapter 7
October 30	Survey Research Cont.	
November 4	Qualitative Methods	Chapter 8 Weisheit Chapter

November 6	Qualitative Data Analysis	Chapter 9
November 11	<i>No Class: Veteran's Day</i>	
<b>November 13</b>	<b>Exam #3 Chapters 7-9</b>	
November 18	Analyzing Content	Chapter 10
November 20	Analyzing Content	Rosenhan Article
November 25	Evaluation Research	Chapter 11
November 27	<i>No Class: Thanksgiving Recess</i>	
December 2	Evaluation Research Cont. Homework Assignment #5	
December 4	Quantitative Data	Chapter 12
December 9	Quantitative Data Cont. Homework Assignment #6	
December 11	Reporting Results	Chapter 13
<b>December 16</b>	<b>Final Exam: Tuesday December 16</b>	<b>Chapter 10-13</b>

\* Schedule, readings, assignments are subject to change at instructor's discretion.

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Homework Assignment #1: Downloading a Journal Article

Due: September 9, 2008

10 Points

Download/copy a peer-reviewed journal article within the criminology/criminal justice journals (i.e. Criminology, Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency). Pick of subject of interest to research (i.e. Bullying, Organized Crime, Auto Theft). Read the article and write a summary of the article including the background premise, main questions, and conclusions. Bring in the article with the summary and be prepared to present your summary to the class.

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Homework Assignment #2: Unethical Research

Due: September 16, 2008

15 Points

Bring to class an example of unethical research. Choose one that is not commonly discussed in texts (Zimbardo, Milgrim, Humphries). In your thought paper, present the following: a summary of the research – its purpose, methodology and findings. Describe specifically why you believe the work is unethical. Discuss whether the research question may have been researched in another more ethical way? Do you think what was learned outweighed the problems with this research? Turn in the unethical example with your thought paper.

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Homework Assignment #3: Variables

Due: October 14, 2008

15 points

Bring to class an academic journal article. **DO NOT USE GOVT PUBLICATIONS.** Use peer-reviewed journal articles. In your thought paper you need to summarize the research conducted. Specify all independent and dependent variables used in this research. Please note that some articles are descriptive in nature and won't have IVs and DVs. Make sure your article does. Describe how authors state the IVs and DVs are related. Turn in the journal article with your thought paper.

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Homework Assignment #4: Measurement

Due: October 21, 2008

10 Points

Bring to class an academic journal article that measures crime/victimization/related CJ topic. Describe the methods used to collect the data. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the way crime/victimization/related CJ topic is measured in this article? How would you improve upon the measurement used? Turn in the journal article with the assignment.

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Homework Assignment #5: Evaluation Research

Due: December 2, 2008

10 Points

When programs do not achieve their expected results, it's due to one of two things: (a) the program was not a good idea to begin with or (b) it was a good idea but was not implemented properly. Discuss why it would be necessary to conduct both a process and an impact evaluation to learn why a program failed.

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Homework Assignment #6- Observational or Unobtrusive Study

Due: December 9, 2008

75 Points

You are to select a topic of study suitable to observation (i.e., public behavior in public places) or the use of unobtrusive measures. Remember the readings and class discussions concerning ethics in research. You may NOT violate any person's right to privacy and you may NOT place you or your subjects at risk.

Formulate a hypothesis and then develop a research design. Make sure to complete all of the necessary tasks involved in research. Consider the ethical issues involved; identify your independent and dependent variables (make sure that your operational definitions are clear); determine how you will select your sample and consider the strengths and weaknesses of your sampling procedure; decide on your research design while evaluating the generalizability and internal validity of your design; determine the method most appropriate for conducting your study.

Now, once you have done this groundwork, go out and do it. Write a three-to-five page, typed and double spaced research report in which you address all of the issues mentioned above.

Use the following outline as a guideline:

- I. Introduction: what are you going to study and why? Include a brief discussion of ethical issues.
- II. Hypothesis: state what you expect to find (do this prior to conducting your research?)
- III. Research Design: what design are you using and why (i.e., what are the strengths and weaknesses of this design?)
- IV. Sample: what sampling approach are you going to use and why? What is your population? Will your sampling technique allow you to generalize back to this population?
- V. Findings: what did you find?
- VI. Summary: to what extent do your findings support your hypothesis? Discuss why the results turned out the way they did. Discuss the strengths and weakness of your research including the validity and reliability of your observations and the internal and external threats to validity of your research design.